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January 2002

Smokejumper Obituary: Lufkin, Francis B. (Winthrop 1940)

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Recommended Citation

National Smokejumper Association, "Smokejumper Obituary: Lufkin, Francis B. (Winthrop 1940)" (2002).
Smokejumper Obituaries. 1227.
https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumper_bios/1227

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Smokejumper Obituary

Lufkin, Francis B. (Winthrop 1940)

Francis, 83, died on February 12, 1998, in Bellingham, WA. He was born August 1, 1914, in Auburn, WA. Francis graduated from high school in 1933 and went to work seasonally for the USFS. During the winter he worked as a faller/bucker and ran trap lines in the Methow Valley near Winthrop.

Francis was one of the USFS employees assigned to the 1939 experimental parachute program as a climber to help get parachutes out of the trees. One thing led to another and, after 30 minutes of instruction given by Frank Derry, he made his first parachute jump on November 10, 1939.

In 1940 Francis, George Honey, Dick Tuttle, and Rufus Robinson were trained at Winthrop for the first smokejumper crew. On August 10, 1940, he and Glenn Smith made the first fire jumps in Region 6. In 1941 he went to Nine Mile RS for refresher training and to learn parachute rigging before returning to Winthrop to be dispatcher for the Chelan NF and manage cargo dropping operations. This pattern continued for the 1942-44 fire seasons.

In 1945 he became the Chelan NF Parachute Project Officer and the Winthrop Base opened with a crew of conscientious objector jumpers (CPS-103).

Francis went on to manage the North Cascades smokejumper base until 1972 when he retired after 33 years with the USFS. He is buried in the Sullivan Cemetery, Winthrop, WA.

(end of excerpt)